

October 20, 2011

Marlene Dortch  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

**Re:** *Connect America Fund, WC Docket, No. 10-90, National Broadband Plan for Our Future, GN Docket No. 09-51, Establishing Just and Reasonable Rates for Local Exchange Carriers, 07-135, High-Cost Universal Service Support, WC Docket No. 05-337, Developing a Unified Intercarrier Compensation Regime, CC Docket No. 01-92*

To the Commission:

The Associate Member Advisory Council (AMAC) of the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA) hereby files this letter in the above-captioned dockets. The AMAC is representative of the nearly 400 associate members that belong to NTCA. Associate members of the NTCA have filed comments and provided information and technical support in, and remain deeply interested in the outcome of the above-captioned proceedings. Toward that end, AMAC members were encouraged by the Consensus Framework created by rural, mid-size, and large carriers that could serve as the basis for impending USF and inter-carrier compensation (ICC) reforms.

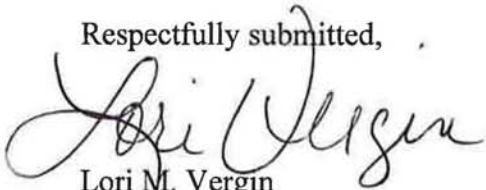
The members of the AMAC, however, are now gravely concerned that reported amendments to the Consensus Framework will wreak damaging impacts on incentives to deploy and maintain broadband networks in rural service areas. If the reported potential amendments are adopted, it is the opinion of the AMAC that investor discouragement will continue, if not increase, leading to depressed investment and resultant negative trends on broadband deployment Nationwide. These adverse repercussions will be visited not only upon rural telecommunications providers, but also upon consumers, as well as nearly 400 companies that represent NTCA's associate membership and similarly-situated entities that are suppliers to the telecommunications markets.

In these regards, the Commission must refrain from adopting rules that affect investments retroactively. Doing so will shatter market confidence in the industry and devastate market trust in the regulatory process: investors will view regulatory structures as shifting, unstable, and unpredictable if retroactively applicable rules are applied. No rational investor will direct capital to projects whose ability to generate income is subject to retroactive fiat.

Moreover, the Commission must position USF affirmatively for the future. The Commission must avoid the temptation to bandage existing programs, leaving true reform for an undetermined future time. That approach would simply extend market overhang and threaten debilitating market uncertainty for rural telecommunications, rural America, and interdependent economic communities. If the Commission is not ready to adopt fully the RLEC portion of the Consensus Framework at this time, then it should, at the least, incorporate it as a tentative conclusion in upcoming notices of proposed rulemaking.

For the reasons stated above, we urge the Commission to foster market certainty and avoid outcomes that will depress investor confidence and the resultant ability of rural telecommunications providers to deploy, maintain, and operate advanced networks. The Commission encouraged successfully the groundbreaking Consensus Framework. In contrast, adverse outcomes that would be occasioned by anticipated Commission action must not occur.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lori Vergin'.

Lori M. Vergin  
President, Mpower Consulting, LLC  
Chair, NTCA AMAC Committee